

The United States Senate Youth Program fell beyond my expectations; it was worth going through the rigorous selection process. The event took place in the heart of Washington D.C, in the “5-diamond” Mayflower hotel— the most historic hotel in D.C (which had to it some more added history with the Spitzer scandal). The program is centered on 104 of the nation’s best students, all of which have an avid passion for politics. In my life I have never had such an opportunity: establishing connections and making lifelong friendships with all the other scholars and military mentors involved. Each of us was assigned into a group of approximately 5 people, with a military mentor. Now, these mentors applied for the program, just as we had to. They were selected and are some of the best in the military. It was the most amazing feeling, walking around Washington D.C with a myriad of officer military personnel escorting us. My mentor is an engineer in the Air Force who majored at MIT in electrical engineering. This man was a source of inspiration to me throughout the week in Washington, and even made me consider joining the military. He taught me many new aspects about the inner workings of the military with the government.

Aside from the friendships and connections I established, the other part of the program, was of course meeting with politicians. However, I underestimated the profile of these politicians. We met with just short of 100 senators, including Chris Dodd, John Kerry, Diane Feinstein. We met various house representatives, ambassadors, Department of State officials (including Deputy Secretary of State, Negroponte), the Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. It a great honor, as well, to meet The President of The United States, G.W Bush in person.

The president was interesting. I could not believe my eyes when he walked across the pathway in front of his beautiful White House where we were waiting for him. He is exactly as he appears on television. Despite a large dislike of his policies by the group, the tone was of course respectful and awe-inspiring. He told us about his family— how he watched Father of The Bride in order to prepare for his daughter’s wedding. He talked to us on legacy and popularity: big issues to someone with a 70% disapproval rating.

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I cannot thank the Hearst Foundation enough for the opportunity, or the A.Z Dept. of Education for selecting me and my partner Iris Lee to participate in the endeavor It has changed my life.